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Mistress Blackburn

A Sketch of the American Revolution

By

John W. Parks

Author of

An Episode of the French Revolution

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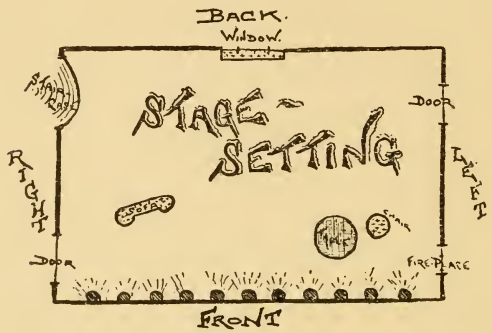
PREFACE.

In writing this scrap, the author has not striven to do more than to make a little *sketch,* of a very simple nature. He is very far from claiming any literary merit for it, as he is well aware that there are many criticisms to be made. But it is simply intended for just what it is, *"a sketch."*

THE AUTHOR.

TIME OF PLAYING, fifteen minutes.
COSTUMES of the Revolutionary period.



PROPERTIES.

BELLOWS for Jonah.
HANDKERCHIEF for Marion.
PAPERS for table.
BANDAGE for Marion.
BOTTLE OF LIQUID for Marion.
HADLEY'S SWORD for Fairlee.

ABBREVIATIONS.

R. Right.
L. Left.
S. C. Staircase.
D. R. Door at Right.
D. L. Door at Left.
W. B. Window at Back.

MISTRESS BLACKBURN.

A SKETCH IN ONE SCENE.

BY

JOHN W. PARKS.

Time:—The day of the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown, October 19, 1781.

Place:—Blackburn Manor, Charleston, South Carolina.

CHARACTERS.

Lord Charles Fairlee, *Of His Majesty's Forces*
Lieutenant John Hadley, *Of the Colonial Army*
Mistress Marion Blackburn,
A true little "American"
Uncle Jonah, *An old negro servant of the Household*
A Soldier

SCENE:—*Drawing-room in Blackburn Manor.*

(JONAH *discovered blowing the embers in the open fireplace, with a pair of bellows*)—"Ma Goodness! Ma Goodness! now here am ol' fool Jonah he go an' get hisself all worked up over dees ter'bul awful times. Poor lil' Missie she cry and carry on ter'bul bad 'cause she hear dat Massa John he done gone and get shooted in de war, an Massa Charles he done treat de young Missie shameful 'cause she done absolutionlly refuse to listen to his foolishness. Massa Charles, he say: "*Why* doan you lub me?" and de little Missie she answer, " 'Cause I hab gibben my heart to anuder much more nobler den you could eber be." Den Massa Charles he storm and rage and say, "Very well, we shall *see*." Den Missie she turn up her pretty lil' nose and sweep right pas' Massa Charles and up de stairs to her room. Den dere is trouble. An' de trouble it dun keep agoin' on. Den cum de news as how Massa John he got shot. But Lor' old Jonah he kin' a ticklish 'bout takin' any stock in dat story. Ah doan know why, but ah just don't. No sir! ah don believe

it. Dere com' de lil' Missie now, ol' Jonah he always know dos lil' footsteps ever since de day when de lil' Missie she walk for de first time. (ENTER *at staircase,* MARION.)

MARION:—Jonah, has Lord Fairlee returned yet?

JONAH:—Not yet, Missie; he dun say notting when he went out.

MARION:—Oh Jonah, *when* are these terrible days going to end? You and I are the only survivors, Jonah, of the unfortunate family. *We* are left to uphold the honor of the household, which I fear will be poorly done, since this Fairlee is a tyrant. Aye, a tyrant. He has me in his power to do his will, but he can *never* win my love, for *that* was given to the bravest, noblest, dearest hero in the American army.

JONAH:—Ah dun kin' o' suspicion de Missie mean Massa John?

MARION: (*With a sigh*) Yes.

JONAH:—Massa John he dun bin powerful kind to ole Jonah in de good ol' days befor' de war; be-

for' de British dey come an' occupy de ole homestead here, an' flar aroun' here as doe dey dun own de hul' earth. Massa John he always treat me 'bout right, Massa John did. One day he say to me, "Jonah," he say, "You take powerful good care ob Miss Marion while I'se away, an' doan let no harm come to her," an' I promise, an' den he goes away to de war. Den de next we hear ob him— MARION *cries softly in her handkerchief.*) Ah! Missie, I forgot, ole Jonah forgot Missie. Forgive me, Miss Marion. Ah thought de Missie believed de same as ole Jonah does.

MARION: (*Drying her eyes.*) What do you mean Jonah?

JONAH:—Ah doan believe dat story about Massa John, Missie.

MARION:—Don't *believe* it?

JONAH:—Deed ah don't, Missie, (*whispers*) ah believe dat Massa John am just as much alive as old Jonah is.

MARION:—Jonah!! Sh—. Someone is coming. (*Exit door right.*)

(*Enter* LORD FAIRLEE, *Left proceeded by* HADLEY. HADLEY *is wounded in the hand and covered with blood and dirt.*)

FAIRLEE:—Gadsooks, lieutenant! but you are obstinate! You will remain here on parole until I can investigate further. If you still persist in refusing to state your business prowling around our outposts at midnight, I shall be forced to use firmer measures with you. Your behavior is suspicious, lieutenant.

JONAH: (*In a whisper aside*) Massa John!! Ah *knew* it! Ah knowed it! (*Exit door right.*)

FAIRLEE:—Jonah! Come back here, you black trash. Here, show the young lieutenant to the west (JONAH *re-enters.*) chamber, where he is to lodge. (HADLEY *remains sullen, throughout.*)

JONAH:—Yes, Massa Charles, I'se gone right away sir, deed ah is. (FAIRLEE *sits at table littered with papers before the fireplace.*) (*Exit* JONAH and HADLEY *at S. C.*)

FAIRLEE: (*To himself, watching the fire.*) This young lieutenant—what does his strange si-

lence mean? Is he an American spy? If not, why is he caught prowling around our lines at dead of night? He seems strangely familiar with this place. Can it be that he knows this little bird of mine that I am keeping caged up here? Can it be—that he—is—in—love—ah, no! what madness—it is possible, though—but improbable. Marry! but I am truly in love. But this man; if he is a spy—he must meet the consequences that come to such as he. I will test him again. (*Exit Left.*)

(*Enter right door.* JONAH *leading* MARION *by the hand.*)

JONAH:—Ah tells you Missie it am de plain old Gospel trute. It *am,* Massa John, and dat am all dere is about it.

MARION:—Jonah it *can't* be. It is *impossible.*

JONAH:—Impossible or *not* impossible. Ah tells you Missie ole Jonah is right dis time for sure. Wait here. (*At staircase, aside.*) Oh, MY, won't dere be some huggin' now. (*Exit.*)

MARION:—If this should be true!! My Jack

come back to me from the dead. Jonah *must* be mistaken. (ENTER *from staircase* HADLEY.)

MARION:—Jack!!!

HADLEY:—My darling! (*They embrace.*)

MARION:—Oh! this is too good to be true; tell me dear, how came you here? Oh-o-o! I'm so glad to see you. (*They sit on sofa at right.*)

HADLEY:—It is too long a story, dear, to tell in detail, suffice it to say that I was sent out on scouting duty by Gen. Green, with a small squad of men, and venturing too near the British lines was taken prisoner, together with my men, by Lord Fairlee, with a company of infantry, which outnumbered us four to one. Two of my men were shot down, and— MARION *sees his wounded hand.*)

MARION:—Jack!!! You are wounded!

HADLEY:—No, a mere scratch. It's nothing, dear. (*Rises.*)

MARION:—Wait. (*Exits hurriedly, D. R.*)

HADLEY: (*Walks about room.*) Am I dreaming? Back in the old homestead again.

My sweetheart's dear face. The same dear little arms around my neck. After all these weary months of longing, and thoughts of her so often flocking through my brain. She's the same dear, sweet little girl that she was when I saw her last. Always cheerful, sweet and lovely. Oh! I love her so that—

(*Re-enter* MARION *with cloth and bottle, D. R.*)

MARION:—Now, dearie, let *me* be surgeon this time. (*blustering.*) Come, let me see your hand. (*Takes* HADLEY'S *hand.*)

HADLEY:—My! but I wish we might always have such sweet little surgeons in the army as this. I know I should want to be wounded twice a day.

MARION:—Now don't talk nonsense. There; isn't that better?

HADLEY:—Yes dear, so much better that I should hardly know that I was wounded. (*As* MARION *finishes the bandage*, LORD FAIRLEE *enters D. L.*)

FAIRLEE:—Hello, what's this? By my faith, Mistress Marion you seem to lose little time in

making acquaintances, or—is—is the young lieutenant a former acquaintance?

MARION: (*Sarcastically.*) Does it so *greatly* interest your lordship?

FAIRLEE:—Marry! Madamoiselle, it does interest me, and so greatly that I would fain know *at once!*

MARION:—*Really!* Your lordship must greatly misjudge my temper if you think I can be *forced.*

FAIRLEE:—Nay, Miss Marion, I did not intend—

HADLEY:—Enough of this! My lord, we are acquainted, in fact, we love each other. Nay Marion, we may as well speak the truth—we have known each other from childhood; have grown up together. (FAIRLEE *shows great emotion.*)

FAIRLEE:—And yet, lieutenant, the telling of this to me only makes the duty of condemning you as a spy the harder to me, not for the sake of you, God forbid, but for the sake of the girl by your side there, whom I love, also. (*Hadley*

ejaculates.) Aye, I have said it, *love* her. Lieutenant, reveal to me your business about our lines at night, and agree to make certain other disclosures to me, and I will let you go your—

HADLEY:—GOD!! How DARE you insult me thus? (*Goes to window at back.*)

FAIRLEE:—Damme! lieutenant, but you are fiery; I did but suggest—

MARION:—Desist, I beg of you!

FAIRLEE:—Pardon me Madamoiselle, I had almost forgotten your presence; would Mademoiselle kindly step aside into the next room.

MARION:—No!! I prefer to remain!

FAIRLEE:—As you will. Lieutenant! I revoke your parole! You shall be shot at once, without delay. (*Aside.*) This must frighten him into revealing his business about our lines. (*Aloud.*) What ho! without there!

MARION: (*Astounded.*) What do you say? (*Runs to* FAIRLEE *and falls on her knees clasping one of his hands.*) No, No, No, you cannot mean it. *Why,* do you know what you are do-

ing. Shooting a man without trial— HADLEY *at back.*)

FAIRLEE:—What ho! without there, I say! (*Impatiently.*)

(*Noise and shouts off stage.*)

MARION:—You *cannot* do it, for *my* sake if you ever cared for me as you say, for the love of heaven you *will* not do this thing.

FAIRLEE:—It is my duty. He is a spy of the enemy's forces.

MARION:—Never; I *will* not believe it!

HADLEY: (*Comes forward.*) Lord Fairlee, with your permission I am now ready to speak, for you will never convict me.

FAIRLEE:—You speak in riddles, lieutenant. Proceed.

(*Slow music.*)

HADLEY:—I but now heard a cry in the street which is the most glorious news ever heard by man, and which convinces me in my belief that you will never convict me, my lord. (*Distant cheering and noise off stage continued.*)

L. of C.

FAIRLEE:—I still fail to comprehend, lieutenant.

HADLEY:—Listen. (*Noise grows louder, and distant shouts are heard of "Cornwallis surrendered!" repeatedly.*)

FAIRLEE: (*Faintly.*) What!!

JONAH *bursts into the room shouting and cheering, followed by a* SOLDIER *of the British, D. L.*)

SOLDIER: (*Salutes.*) Lord Cornwallis has surrendered at Yorktown, your lordship, and the war is at an end!

JONAH:—Praise be de lord! (*Repeats several times with arms uplifted and dances around.* MARION *and* HADLEY *embrace.* FAIRLEE *staggers to table and leans against it with one hand to brow, then speaks, taking sword from table and handing it to Hadley.*) (*After a pause.*)

FAIRLEE:—Your sword, lieutenant. (TABLEAUX.)

CURTAIN.

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